



Mark Kelleher came into our lives on the 25th July 1967. A normal healthy baby. We were unaware initially of any health problems. As he continued to grow into a toddler, it became more apparent that he wasn't thriving as well as he should be. He wasn't growing so well. He was a little floppy and struggled to keep his food down. It wasn't until he was about 3 years old that Mark was diagnosed with Lowe Syndrome. We knew so little about this rare genetic condition, and given the times, early 70's, we had little access to learning more, other than what the doctor told us. Mark's prognosis was devastating. We were told he would not live beyond 7 years old. He continued to have issues with eating and digestion for his early childhood. But then, just like that, it got better! The digestion issues just ceased. One of the first of many amazing surprises that Mark has blessed us with throughout his extraordinary, long and healthy life.

For Mark's late childhood, he was simply a happy, healthy and thriving little boy who sought fun, mischief and laughter every single day. He loves life, and all who cross his path, love him back. His siblings' childhood memories of Mark are hilarious, mirthful high jinks, filled with warmth and love. Mark was no burden or worry to them, he just made their life happier.

Having ‘survived’ to his teens, we were then told again, Mark wouldn’t live to see adulthood. Yet again, we were in the shadow of borrowed time.

But true to form, Mark continued to live full, healthy and happy teen years. He boarded on weekdays at St Joseph’s School for the Blind in Dublin. There, he made friends all around him and caused no shortage of tricks and fun-seeking strife for his teachers. It was hard to be cross with Mark when every day his tricks and jokes were hilarious and fun loving. There, he learned independent living life skills, but was and is, not interested in this as he is a sociable and family centred boy.

Upon graduating, Mark returned to live full time with us, his parents (Pat and Michael) in the family home. Being the eldest child, Mark had no shortage of siblings he kept entertained. He started work at a local COPE centre that was just around the corner from his home. For the following decades, he spent his weekdays doing occupational work tasks, but mainly seeking every opportunity for chatting, joking and always flirting! Mark shone there. He was popular and always an asset. He had many close friends. The highlight for his workplace was the weekly Wednesday disco.

Through his employment, Mark contributed some of his wages to the household, as any adult does. As an adult with a full time job, Mark was even paying his own way. Really quite extraordinary an achievement when you think about it, given the odds that were set against him.

Good health, a full social life, a close family, and a job that he thoroughly enjoyed, annual sun holidays (his all-time favourite destination- annual visits to Lourdes) This is what most of us dream of having. Isn’t this what a successful life looks like?

Mark has a lifelong passion for music, the radio and TV. He can tell you the name of pretty much any song, who sung it, and in what year it was released. Whenever Mark is at home, the house is filled with the sound of music. Just one of the many, many ways Mark makes life richer and happier. Notwithstanding, he is a very articulate man and can hold an interesting and warm conversation with just about anyone.

Now, in 2021, Mark is turning the ripe age of 54. When covid and lockdown restrictions came about the year before, Mark’s workplace was shut down. He lost his routine, his pals, his lifestyle, even his weekly disco. And you know what, he didn’t even once complain about it, He adjusted to his new normal. And still, he is bringing all those around him blessings and happiness. He carries himself with a grand dignity, and elegance of nature. He has never had a bad word about another, and when people let him down, he responds with

dignity and purity. Mark is 100% a Gentleman. We could not be more proud of him. We could not be more grateful that he has come into our lives.

I do hope that Mark's story gives you an insight into how blessed you may be with your own child who has Lowe Syndrome. And that one can never quite tell what the road ahead may be. Mark is lucky, we are lucky, that his, is paved with pure joy.